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(54) Title: LEGAL INFORMATION DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM AND METHOD

(57) Abstract: This invention claims a method for electronically distributing legal information by storing said legal information in a legal information database, storing information about authorized users who have access to the legal information in an authorized user database, generating customized legal information based upon the information in the authorized user database, and transmitting that customized legal information to a user.

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LEGAL INFORMATION DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM AND METHOD

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

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This patent application claims priority of provisional application number 60/166,359, filed November 16, 1999, the disclosures of which are incorporated fully herein by reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

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The current invention relates generally to the provision of legal knowledge over the Internet. More specifically, the current invention relates to a system for providing corporate specific legal information over the Internet.

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We live in a world of complex legal issues. These issues affect many different activities of both individuals and corporations. In order for corporations to minimize losses due to legal expenses and illegal activity, it is important for the corporation and its employees to have access to legal information.

20

Often employees of a corporation have common legal questions that can be answered in some type of handbook. Law however, is constantly changing, and a handbook does not keep up to date with the most recent advances in the law. Therefore, the handbook must be constantly revised at considerable expense. Further, the handbook is cumbersome, and may not be utilized because of its complexity. The handbook is limited in the type of information that it can contain, and cannot easily lead an employee to the correct source for questions that are not covered in the book.

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With the introduction of the Internet, it is possible to update information as soon as the law changes. Furthermore, it is possible to create a reference source, with all types of links between different content areas, so that a user can quickly find information about a legal issue. The information can be presented in a variety of formats, including audio, video, and animation as well as text.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

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The present invention seeks to combine the benefits of the Internet with the complex legal needs of corporations. The present invention is to a system and method for electronically distributing legal information. The information is distributed via a server to a user terminal over a computer network. In an embodiment of the present invention, legal information is stored in a legal information database connected to the server. User information is stored in an authorized user database also connected to the server. The server customizes legal information based upon information in the authorized user database, and then communicates the customized legal information to the user terminal.

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In an embodiment the legal information is divided into modules, the modules are aggregated together to form customized legal information; and the aggregated modules are transmitted by the server to the user terminal. Each module may have a tutorial, a quiz,

1 frequently asked questions, lists of tips, contact information, a handbook, and links to
additional sources of information. The tutorial, quiz, frequently asked questions, lists of tips,
5 contact information, handbook, and links to additional sources of information are all
customizable based on the user information in the authorized user database.

In one embodiment, users are authenticated prior to accessing the information. In an
embodiment, the server receives a user name and password from a user. The server compares
the received user name and password with user names and passwords stored in the authorized
10 user database to find a match. Once a user has been authenticated, all of the interaction with
the user may be tracked in a tracking database. In an embodiment, each module, lesson and
test provided by the server to the user terminal is tracked. Data in the tracking database may
be reported to the user and to a third party.

In an additional embodiment of the present invention, the server provides tests
regarding legal knowledge to a user terminal. A user takes the test and submits the test results
15 to the server. The server tracks the test results and stores the test results in the tracking
database coupled to the server. As with other data in the tracking database, the test results
may be reported to the user and a third party.

In an embodiment, a user's legal information may be determined by the user's
employer. Alternatively, a user may select the legal information to be provided to them by
20 submitting their job responsibilities, preferences and interests to the server. Additionally, the
user may enter their occupational level of management. The server selects legal information
for the user based on their job responsibilities, preferences, interests and management level.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

25 These and other features and advantages of the present invention will be better
understood by reference to the following detailed description when considered in conjunction
with the accompanying drawings wherein:

FIG. 1 is a block diagram of a system for distributing legal information in accordance
with one embodiment of the present invention;

30 FIG. 2 is a flow diagram showing login and use of a system for distributing legal
information in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 3 is a web page of a system according to one embodiment of the present
invention, showing an introduction page;

35 FIG. 4 is a web page of a system according to an embodiment of the present invention,
showing a login page;

FIG. 5 is a flow diagram showing user authentication in accordance with an
embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 6 is a portion of a web page of a system according to one embodiment of the
present invention, showing an area where a user enters their job responsibilities;

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FIG. 7 is a portion of a web page of a system according to one embodiment of the present invention, showing an area where a user enters their management level;

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FIG. 8a is a portion of a web page of a system according to one embodiment of the present invention, showing a list of modules;

FIG. 8b is an additional portion of a web page of a system according to one embodiment of the present invention, showing a list of modules;

FIG. 9 is a web page of a system according to one embodiment of the present invention, showing a module introduction;

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FIG. 10 is a web page of a system according to one embodiment of the present invention, showing a tutorial introduction;

FIG. 11 is a web page of a system according to one embodiment of the present invention, showing lessons and chapters;

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FIG. 12 is a web page of a system according to an embodiment of the present invention, showing detailed lesson information;

FIG. 13 is a portion of a web page of a system according to one embodiment of the current invention, showing a handbook page;

FIG. 14 is a web page of a system according to one embodiment of the present invention, showing frequently asked questions;

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FIG. 15 is a portion of a web page of a system according to one embodiment of the present invention, showing a top ten list;

FIG. 16 is a web page of a system according to one embodiment of the present invention, showing the corporation's policies on an issue;

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FIG. 17 is a web page of a system according to one embodiment of the present invention, showing contact information on an issue.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

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A system for a legal information distribution system in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention is illustrated in FIG. 1. The system of FIG. 1 has multiple user devices 220a-220n coupled to information servers 222a-222m through one or more remote communication interfaces. In the embodiment described, the remote communication interface comprises the Internet, although in alternative embodiments the remote communication interface comprises an Intranet or other computer to computer interface.

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The Internet has recently been popularized by the rapid success of the World Wide Web (WWW or Web). The Web links together a variety of computers from around the world and various topics in a non-sequential web of associations which permit a user to browse from one topic to another, regardless of the format and order of topics. Users access and browse the Web using a web browser that generally resides and is executed on the user's computer. Commercially available web browsers such as Netscape's Navigator™ and

1 Microsoft Internet Explorer™ are very common and accessible by personal computer (PC)
users. The web browser allows a user to retrieve and render hyper-media content from the
network of computers within the Web, including text, sound, video and other types of data.
5 This hyper-media content is stored on different web sites.

Web sites are locations on server computers that are accessible through the Internet.
A variety of information, such as hyper media contents and databases can be stored on a web
site and be accessed by users with computers connected to the Internet. One of the
applications of the Web is its capability to link a web site with a database so users can search
10 for information. In essence, the web site becomes the user interface (UI) for database
applications enabling a user to select search criteria and execute searches of a database that
resides on a remote computer. To serve up pages, web sites need a server (a host computer)
and server software that runs on the server. The host computer manages the communication
protocols and houses the pages and related software required to create a web site on the
15 Internet. Host computers spread throughout the Internet can house different web sites.

The Internet works based on a client/server model. In this model, a client computer
communicates with a server computer on which information resides and the client computer
depends on the server to deliver requested information and services. These services may
involve searching for information and sending it back to the client, such as when a database
20 on the Web is queried. Other examples of these services are delivering web pages through
a web site, and handling incoming and outgoing e-mail. Typically, the client is a PC user
using a browser to connect to and search the servers. The servers (also known as hosts) are
usually more powerful computers that house the data and databases. The client/server model
enables the Web to be conceived of as a limitless file storage medium distributed among
25 thousands of host computers, all accessible by any individual PC user.

The web site and the hosts that make up the World Wide Web need to have unique
locations so that a client computer can locate and retrieve information and web pages. For
example, the unique identifier for a host computer is called an IP (Internet Protocol) address
and the unique identifier for a web site (web page) is called the URL (Uniform Resource
30 Locator). A URL indicates where the host computer is located, the location of the web site
on the host, and the name of the web page and the file type of each document among other
information.

Home and small business users connect to the Internet through Internet service
providers using modems and common telephone or cable networks. Wireless and satellite
35 connections are also possible. Larger businesses typically obtain access to the Internet
through their private computer networks, using appropriate safeguards to prevent
unauthorized access by outside parties to a company's private network.

FIG. 1 shows a block diagram of a typical Internet client/server environment used by
the users and servers in one embodiment of the present invention. User devices 220a-220n
used by the users are connected to the Internet 221 through communication links 233a-233n.

1 Optionally, a local network 234 may serve as the connection between some of the user
devices 220a-220n, such as the user device 220a and the Internet 221. Servers 222a-222m
are also connected to the Internet 221 through respective communication links. Servers 222a-
5 222m include information and databases accessible by the user devices 220a-220n. In one
embodiment of the present invention, databases for storing legal information reside on at least
one of the servers 222a-222m and are accessible by users using one or more of the user
devices 220a-220n to obtain legal information.

10 In one embodiment of the present invention, each of the user devices 220a-220n
typically includes a central processing unit (CPU) 223 for processing and managing data; and
a keyboard 224 and a mouse 225 for inputting data. A main memory 227 such as a Random
Access Memory (RAM), a video memory 228 for storing image data, and a mass storage
device 231 such as a hard disk for storing data and programs are also included in a typical
15 user device. Video data from the video memory 228 is displayed on a Display screen 230 by
a video amplifier 229 under the control of the CPU 223. A communication device 232, such
as a modem, provides access to the Internet 221. Optionally, one or more of user devices
220a-220n may be connected to a local network 234. An Input/Output (I/O) device 226 reads
data from various data sources and outputs data to various data destinations.

20 Servers (hosts) 222a-222m are also computers and typically have architecture similar
to the architecture of user devices 220a-220n. Generally, servers differ from the user devices
in that servers can handle multiple telecommunications connections at one time. Usually,
servers have more storage and memory capabilities, and higher speed processors. Some
server (host) systems may actually be several computers linked together, with each handling
incoming web page requests. In one embodiment, each server 222a-222m has a storage
25 medium 236a-236m, such as a hard disk, a CD drive, or a DVD for loading computer
software. When software such as the software responsible for executing the processes in
FIGs. 2-17 is loaded on the server 222a, an off-the-shelf web management software or load
balancing software may distribute the different modules of the software to different servers
222a-222m. A server may utilize an operating system such as DOS, Microsoft Windows, or
30 Linux. The server may use off the shelf, or open source software to generate and serve web
pages. In an embodiment, the server uses Apache to generate and serve web pages. The page
generating software generates web pages that have, for example, hypertext markup language
(HTML) and Javascript components. Additionally, the server may be protected from
unauthorized access by the use of a firewall, such as one produced by Checkpoint.

35 Therefore, in one embodiment, the computer program responsible for executing the
present invention resides on one or more servers. Databases to carry out the processes of
FIGs. 2-17 can be created, maintained and edited in many different types of database software
including Access, FoxPro, and Oracle. In one embodiment of the present invention the
database software is Oracle 8.x.

1 An exemplary web site location 235 is shown on server 222a in FIG. 1. The web site
235 is the UI for accessing the database described below. The web site 235 has a unique
address that is used by the users to access server 222a (in this example) and the web site
5 location on the server 222a. The computer software for executing the processes of the present
invention may also reside on the web site 235.

An overview of the process of using the system is shown in FIG. 2. First, a user
obtains access to the system by authenticating themselves, Box 30. Next, a user is presented
with a selectable list of modules, including an indication of their progress within each
10 module, Box 32. Once a user selects a module, the user is provided with a selectable list of
lessons and a review quiz, Box 34. Once the user selects a lesson, the user is prompted to
select a chapter within the lesson from a list of chapters, Box 36. Once the user is ready, the
user takes the review quiz for a module, Box 38, and if passed successfully completes the
module. A user can move to and from modules, lessons and chapters at will.

15 In an embodiment, the system is organized around a company specific web site. The
web site is password protected so that only company authorized personnel have access to the
contents. An authorized user database containing information about authorized users is
accessible by the server. The authorized user database contains user names and passwords
for all authorized users.

20 In an embodiment of the present invention, a corporation provides the information
about the employees that will have access to the server to generate the authorized user
database. In a first embodiment, the corporation loads user information into a data file and
sends the datafile to a registration server. The data file may contain, for example, a user I.D.,
password, first name, middle initial, last name, e-mail address, employee I.D., as well as
25 additional fields defined by the corporation. A corporation may derive the data file from
currently existing corporate employee database files. The file is named so as to indicate
whether the employees in the file are being added, modified, deactivated, or deleted from the
authorized user database. The registration server generates the authorized user database from
the data file. In the first embodiment, the employee users will not have the ability to modify
30 their personal information and future modifications are done via data files.

In order to ensure that the data file can be successfully interpreted by the registration
server to generate an accurate authorized user database, guidelines are provided for the data
file. Once the registration server receives the data file, the registration server conducts a
check of the data file to ensure that the guidelines were followed. First, any file naming
35 guidelines are checked, and if okay, the data guidelines are checked. If all of the guidelines
were not followed, the data file is returned to the user along with an explanation of which
guidelines were not followed.

In a second embodiment, the initial registration is conducted via data file as explained
above. However, new employees are allowed to self register via a self-registration page that
is presented to the user by the server. A new user may be prompted to enter corporate

1 identification in order to authorize the registration. Further, existing employee users may
have the ability to modify their personal information. Thus, future modifications may be done
by data file, by allowing new users to add themselves, and by allowing existing users to
5 modify their personal information.

In a third embodiment, the individual users self-register via a self-registration page
that is presented to the user by the server. Regardless of how the users are registered, once
registration is complete, all use of the website can be tracked and reported as explained
below.

10 In addition to supplying information about all authorized users, the corporation selects
the information modules that are available to the authorized users. The corporation may also
customize the look and feel of the web site, and information taught to users. Additionally,
the corporation may select specific messages to be displayed to a user upon the happening of
an event, such as the successful completion of a module.

15 As shown in FIG. 3, the web site has an introduction screen to tell viewers where they
are and what the site is intended to accomplish. The introduction screen contains a hotlink
button 10 for registered users, that when selected, provides the user with a login screen,
shown in FIG. 4. If the system is set up to allow new users to register themselves, then the
introduction screen also contains a hotlink button for new users to press (not shown). When
20 a user presses the new user button, the server generates a new user data entry page, and sends
the new user entry page to the user. The new user data entry page prompts a user to enter
some of, for example, a user I.D., password, first name, middle initial, last name, and e-mail
address.

25 As shown in FIG. 4, a login page according to an embodiment of the present invention
has a user name entry box 12, where a user places a previously assigned user name. The login
page also has a password entry box 14 where the user enters a previously created and assigned
password. Once the user has entered their user name and password, the user presses the login
button 16.

30 An overview of the user name and password authentication process is shown in FIG.
5. When the user presses the login button on the login page, the server obtains a user name
from the user name entry box and a password from the password entry box, Box 40. The user
name is compared to the user names in the authorized user database in connected to the
server, Box 42. If the user name is not found in the authorized user database, the server
generates and re-transmits the login page to user and prompts the user to enter another user
35 name and password. If the user name is found in the authorized user database, the password
is compared to the password stored in the database on the server for the found user name, Box
44. If the password does not match the password stored in the authorized user database, then
the user the server generates and re-transmits the login page to user and prompts the user to
enter another user name and password. If the password matches the appropriate password

1 stored in the authorized user database connected to the server, then the system generates a module page and sends the module page to the user.

5 In an alternative embodiment of the present invention, a new user, not associated with a pre-registered corporation, self registers with the system. A new user data entry page prompts a user to enter some of, for example, a user I.D., password, first name, middle initial, last name, and e-mail address. Additionally, as illustrated in FIG. 6, the new user data entry page presents the user with a list of checkboxes. The user checks off the duties that they are responsible for, or that they wish to learn more information about. This enables the system to tailor the issues presented to the user based on the user's responsibilities and interests.

10 In one embodiment of the current invention, the duties that the user is given the option of selecting include: authorizing employee investigations, communicating with competitors, communicating with the media, conducting performance evaluations, contracting with vendors, dealing with government officials, dealing with officials of foreign companies, dealing with officials of domestic companies, determining product/service pricing, entering into contracts, interacting with government regulators, interacting with securities analysts, interviewing prospective employees, making pricing decisions, making purchasing decisions, negotiating contracts, owning company securities, participating in industry associations, seeking advice from counsel with corporate staff attorneys, serving on another company's board of directors, serving on your company's board of directors, setting purchasing guidelines, terminating employees, testifying before governmental agencies, and trading your company's securities.

20 As illustrated in FIG. 7, also on the new user data entry page is another list that enables the user to select their management level. In one embodiment of the current invention, the user may choose senior executive, junior executive, management or staff. This enables the service to tailor the legal information to the types of responsibilities that someone in the user's management position is likely to encounter.

25 Once the user has selected the duties that they have and the management level that applies to them, the user submits their request for information to the system. In one embodiment, the system contains a database of modules, indexed by the activity that they relate to and the management level that they apply to. Once the user's choices have been submitted, the system selects modules and displays them for the reader on a module list page. The module list page displays the list of modules applicable to the user based on the selected job duties and management level, and the user is given the opportunity to select a module to learn about in more detail.

30 Regardless of whether the user is a registered employee of a corporation that has chosen the available modules, or an individual who has had modules selected for them based on responsibilities, interests, and position, the user is presented with a list of modules on a module page, as shown in FIGs. 8a and 8b. In an embodiment, the system allows for tracking

1 of which modules a specific user has viewed and whether a user has completed a given
module. In one embodiment, the system tracks which module a specific user has viewed by
constantly updating a tracking database that is linked to the authorized user database. The
5 tracking database contains a field for every module, and the field contains a first value if the
user has not viewed the module, a second value if the user has viewed a portion of the
module, and a third value if the user has completed a module. When the server constructs the
module page, the server also checks the tracking database and indicates, next to the module,
whether the user has viewed, started or completed the module.

10 Following a selection by the user of one of the modules on the module list page, the
system generates and provides the user with a module summary page, as illustrated in FIG.
9. The module summary page contains a brief summary of the legal area and provides the
user with the option to learn more about this area. The module summary page contains links
to available resources including a tutorial with a review quiz, a handbook entry, frequently
15 asked questions in the area, a top ten list of important things to remember about the module,
a link to communicate with an attorney specific to this area about a particular problem, and
a link to third party information sources. If the user is accessing a corporate customized web
site the module summary page also contains a link to the company's policies with regard to
the area. In an additional embodiment, the module summary page contains a link to the quiz
20 contained within the tutorial.

In one embodiment, shown in FIG. 10, when the user selects the tutorial from the
module summary page, the server generates and sends a tutorial introduction page to the user.
The system organizes the tutorial by lessons. The tutorial introduction page provides links
to every lesson, so that a user may skip to the area that interests them. The system also
25 provides a review quiz for each module and a link to the review quiz is found on the tutorial
introduction page.

In one embodiment of the current invention, the questions in the review quiz are
multiple choice, where the user simply chooses the letter of the answer that they believe is
correct. In another embodiment of the current invention the questions are true or false. In yet
30 another embodiment, the review quiz combines both multiple choice and true or false
question formats.

In an embodiment of the present invention, the system tracks whether a user has
accessed, partially completed, or completed each lesson or quiz in a given tutorial. The
system does this by constantly updating the tracking database that is linked to the authorized
35 user database.

The tracking database contains a field for every lesson of every module, and each field
may contain a first value if the user has not viewed the lesson, a second value if the user has
viewed a portion of the lesson, and a third value if the user has completely viewed a lesson.
The tracking database also contains a field for each quiz in each module. Each quiz field in
the tracking database may contain values indicating that a user has not taken the quiz, taken

1 the quiz, failed the quiz, passed the quiz, the number of questions that the user answered
correctly on the quiz, or the percentage of questions that the user answered correctly on the
quiz. A prior determination is made what number of questions must be answered correctly
5 to pass the review quiz for each module. The number of questions, is programmed into the
server, and the actual score obtained by a user is compared to the passing score to obtain
values for the tracking database. In an embodiment, failing scores are not counted. In
another embodiment, a user may retake the review quiz a pre-specified number of times.

Before constructing the tutorial summary page, the server checks the tracking database
10 to see which lessons have been viewed and completed, and whether the quiz has been taken
and successfully completed. When the server constructs the tutorial summary page, next to
each lesson and the quiz, the server indicates the status of the user's progress with regard to
each lesson and the quiz. In another embodiment of the present invention, the server stores
the amount of time a user spends in a given lesson and module and saves the amount of time
15 to the tracking database.

Once the user selects a specific lesson, the system generates a page, as shown in FIG.
11, showing chapters within the lesson and sends the chapter selection page to the user, so
that a user can skip to a particular chapter within the lesson. Once a user selects a chapter the
server generates a chapter page that contains specific information and sends the chapter page
20 to the user. For example, FIG. 12 illustrates an introduction chapter to a tutorial on
Advertising. The chapter page also contains links, if applicable, to the next chapter or the
previous chapter.

In an embodiment of the present invention, the user cannot take the module review
quiz until they have completed each of the lessons in the module. When the user selects the
25 quiz link from the module menu, the system checks the tracking database to verify that the
user has completed all of the lessons in the module. If the user has not completed all of the
lessons in the module, then the system returns the user to the module introduction screen and
generates an error page notifying the user that the user needs to complete all of the lessons
before they can take the module review quiz.

30 In an alternative embodiment, the user can select to test out of the lessons in a given
module. The user can select the review quiz without completing one or more of the lessons
within the module. If the user successfully completes the review quiz, the server records the
successful result in the module review quiz field in the tracking database and places a value
in the module field of the tracking database indicating that the module has been completed.

35 In an embodiment, shown in FIG. 13, the page selected by the user is a handbook entry
page. The system organizes the handbook as one large entry that has a series of sub-modules
that the user may jump to by selecting a module organized jump link presented to them by the
service in a separate section of the page.

In another embodiment, the web page selected by the user is a list of frequently asked
questions. As shown in FIG. 14, the frequently asked question page lists the frequently asked

1 questions for that module. The question are selectable by the user. When the user selects a
question, the system opens a new browser window on the user's computer, and generates and
sends to the user an answer. In one embodiment of the current invention, the system
5 organizes the list of frequently asked questions by sub-topic and the user is prompted to select
the sub-topic that interests them.

In another embodiment, shown in FIG. 15, the web page selected by the user comprises
a list of the top ten things to remember about the module. Each of the things to remember
may contain a link to the particular tutorial or handbook section that discusses it.

10 In another embodiment, shown in FIG. 16, the module detail page selected by the user
comprises a page showing the specific policies of the company that they work for with regard
to the issue. This page contains a list of policies. In another embodiment of the current
invention, this page also contains a company's specific forms and document templates for
documents related to the area of the law being researched.

15 In another embodiment, the module detail page selected by the user is a page showing
links to relevant legal information, FIG. 17. The information may be from third party vendors
or government web sites. The system provides the user with the option of selecting one of
these links and moving their Internet browser from the legal service website page, directly to
the third party site. The system contains links to government agencies, trade associations, and
20 other relevant entities.

In another embodiment, the module detail page selected by the user is a page showing
the contact information for in-house or outside counsel of the corporation. Alternatively, if
the user is an individual, the contact information page may have links to attorneys in the
user's area who specialize in the area of law being researched.

25 Access to the data in the tracking database provides employers with information about
which employees have completed legal training, how much usage the site is getting, and what
areas of the site are of most concern to employees. The service tracks the identity of a site
user by tracking the activity of a user once the user has logged into the system using their user
name and password.

30 Access to the data may be in the form of reports generated for either the corporation
or an individual user. In a first embodiment of the present invention, the system generates
a report that shows a user's activity in each of the lessons in each of the available modules.
In additional embodiments, a report is generated by the system that shows whether a user
completed the quiz in each of the available modules, and the results of the quiz in terms of
35 passing, failing, percentage of questions correct, and number of questions correct.

A user with special privileges in the authorized user database is given an additional
hotlink to a report manager page on the module list page. If a user presses the report manager
hotlink, the server generates and transmits a report manager page. The report manager page
has a hotlink for searches on several different search criteria. In one embodiment, a user can

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search the tracking database for information based on any number of criteria and generate a report about all users.

5

In an additional embodiment, a user can get a virtual report card that shows their status in each lesson and review quiz in each module. A user with special privileges can create a virtual report card for other users as well as themselves. A user with special privileges can search for a particular user by entering, for example, the user's I.D., last name, or first name.

10

Additionally, a user with special privileges can export a report from the tracking database, into another database software application. In one embodiment, the exported report may include user profile information such as a user I.D., first name, middle initial, last name, e-mail, client specific fields, and a user registration date. The exported report may also include the following information for each module based on the user, the module number, the module name, the status of use with regard to each lesson, the time spent in the module, any module review quiz results, and the number of different times that the user visited the module.

15

The preceding description has been presented with reference to the presently preferred embodiment of the invention. Workers skilled in the art and technology to which this invention pertains will appreciate that alterations and changes in the described system can be practiced without departing from the spirit, principles and scope of this invention.

20

Accordingly, the present invention provides for a system for distributing legal information. Although this invention has been described in certain specific embodiments, many additional modifications and variations would be apparent to those skilled in the art. It is therefore to be understood that this invention may be practiced otherwise than as specifically described. Thus, the present embodiments of the invention should be considered in all respects as illustrative and not restrictive, the scope of the invention to be determined by the claims supported by this application and their equivalents rather than the foregoing description.

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CLAIMS

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1. A method for electronically distributing legal information comprising the steps of:

storing legal information in a first database;

storing user information of users who have access to the legal information in the first database in a second database;

generating customized legal information based upon the user information in the second database; and

transmitting the customized legal information to a user.

15

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the legal information is divided into modules; the modules are aggregated together to form customized legal information; and the aggregated modules are transmitted to a user.

20

3. The method of claim 2 wherein the legal information in each module further comprises at least one of a tutorial, a quiz, frequently asked questions, lists of tips, contact information, a handbook, and links to additional sources of information; and the at least one of a tutorial, frequently asked questions, lists of tips, contact information, a handbook, and links to additional sources of information is customized based on the user information in the second database.

25

4. The method claim 3 further comprising:

receiving authentication information from a user;

authenticating the user based on user information in the second database.

30

5. The method of claim 4 further comprising:

tracking at least one of the modules, lessons, and tests provided to the user; and

reporting the at least one of the modules, lessons, and tests provided to the user to at

least one of the user and a third party.

35

6. The method of claim 4 further comprising the steps of:

transmitting a test to a user;

receiving test results from the user;

tracking the test results received from the user; and

reporting the test results received from the user to at least one of the user and a third party.

1 7 The method of claim 4 herein the user information in the second database further comprises an employer identifier; and an employer specifies the modules to be transmitted to the user having a specific employer identifier.

5 8. The method of claim 4 further comprising:
receiving at least one of job responsibilities, preferences and interests from a user;
receiving a management level from a user;
selecting modules for a user based upon the at least one of job responsibilities,
10 preferences, interests and management level of the user.

 9. A system for distributing legal information to users comprising:
an information server coupled to a computer network;
a user terminal coupled to the computer network;
15 a first database coupled to the computer network for storing legal information; and
a second database coupled to the computer network for storing user information about
users with access to the information server;
wherein the information server is configured to receive requests for information from
the user terminal, aggregate legal information from the first database based on user
20 information stored in the second database, and transmit the legal information to the user
terminal.

 10. The system of claim 9 wherein the server is further configured to aggregate legal
information based upon the requirements of a user's employer.

25 11. The system of claim 9 further comprising a tracking database coupled to the
computer network; wherein the server is further configured to track the information provided
to the user terminal in the tracking database.

30 12. The system of claim 11 wherein the server is further configured to transmit tests
based on legal information to the user terminal, receive responses to the test from the user
terminal, and track the test responses in the tracking database.

35 13. The system of claim 12 further comprising a third party terminal; wherein the
server is further configured to transmit a report of information provided to the user terminal
and test responses received from the user terminal to the third party terminal.

 14. A computerized method for creating a course of legal studies over a computer
network comprising the steps of:
storing information about a plurality of legal topics;

1 storing information about a plurality of authorized users;
receiving a request by a user using a terminal coupled to the computer network for
legal information;
5 aggregating information about a plurality of legal topics based on information about
an authorized user; and
transmitting the aggregated legal information to the user.

15 15. The computerized method of claim 14 further comprising: prompting a user
to enter authentication information including a user name and password;
receiving authentication information from the user; and
comparing the authentication information from the user to stored authentication
information to determine authorization.

15 16. The computerized method of claim 15 further comprising tracking the
aggregated legal information provided to the user.

20 17. The computerized method of claim 14 wherein the information about a plurality
of legal topics comprises at least one of tutorials, quizzes, frequently asked questions, lists
of tips, contact information, a handbook, and links to additional sources of legal information.

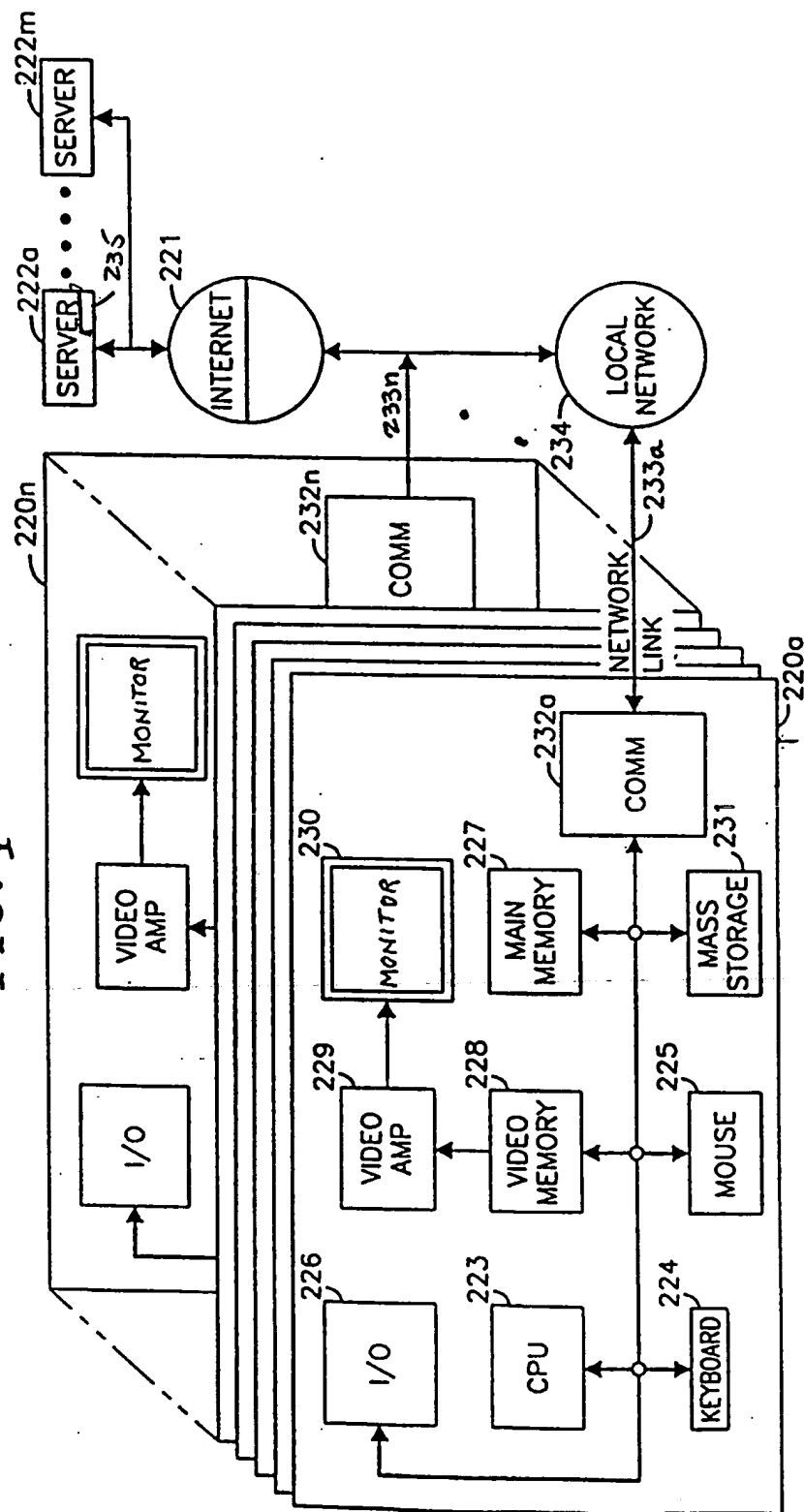
25 18. The computerized method of claim 17 further comprising transmitting a quiz
to a user terminal coupled to the network; receiving quiz results from the user terminal
coupled to the network; comparing the quiz results to a preselected benchmark; storing the
quiz results; and reporting the quiz results to the user terminal coupled to the network.

30 19. A computer readable medium having stored thereon a set of instructions
including instruction for distributing legal information, the instruction, when executed by a
microprocessor cause the microprocessor to perform the steps of:

30 storing information about a plurality legal topics;
storing information about a plurality of authorized users;
receiving a request for information from a user;
prompting the user to enter authentication information;
authenticating the user based upon the authentication information entered by the user
35 in comparison with stored authorized user information;
aggregating a portion of the stored information about a plurality of legal topics;
transmitting the aggregated portion of the stored information about a plurality of legal
topics to the user; and
storing tracking information about the transmitted information.

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FIG. 1



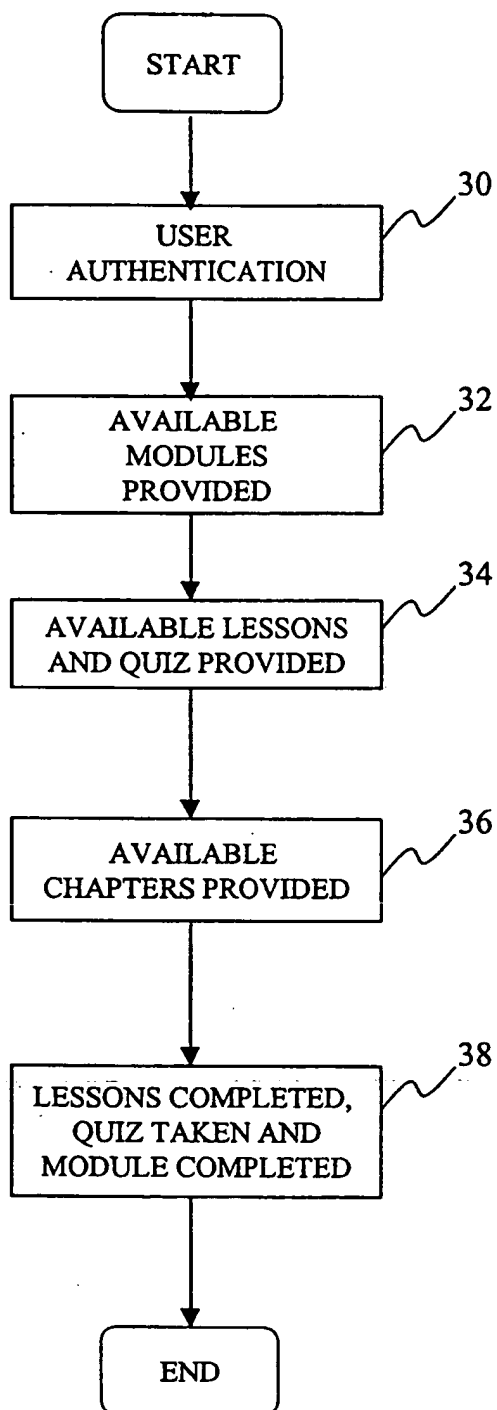


FIG. 2

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LEGAL COMPLIANCE EDUCATION

committed to conducting business with integrity and in accordance with applicable law. All associates are expected to know and follow Code of Business Conduct, related policies, and basic legal concepts relevant to their jobs.

The Center will help you understand concepts, recognize legal problems when they arise and know when to seek legal advice. The consists of modules, or courses, each of which covers an important legal issue. You should begin a module by completing the Tutorial and the related Quiz. This will familiarize you with the basic concepts and test your understanding of the topic. You should then review the Top Ten List of points to keep in mind when applying these basic concepts to your job. There are also a list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and a fully indexed Handbook as reference materials, available whenever you need them. You can also access relevant policies (when applicable) by clicking the "Policies" button at the top of the page.

Enter

registered users ~10

FIG. 3

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LEGAL COMPLIANCE EDUCATION

Please enter your *user name* and *password* to login

User Name: ~12

Password: ~14

~16

FIG. 4

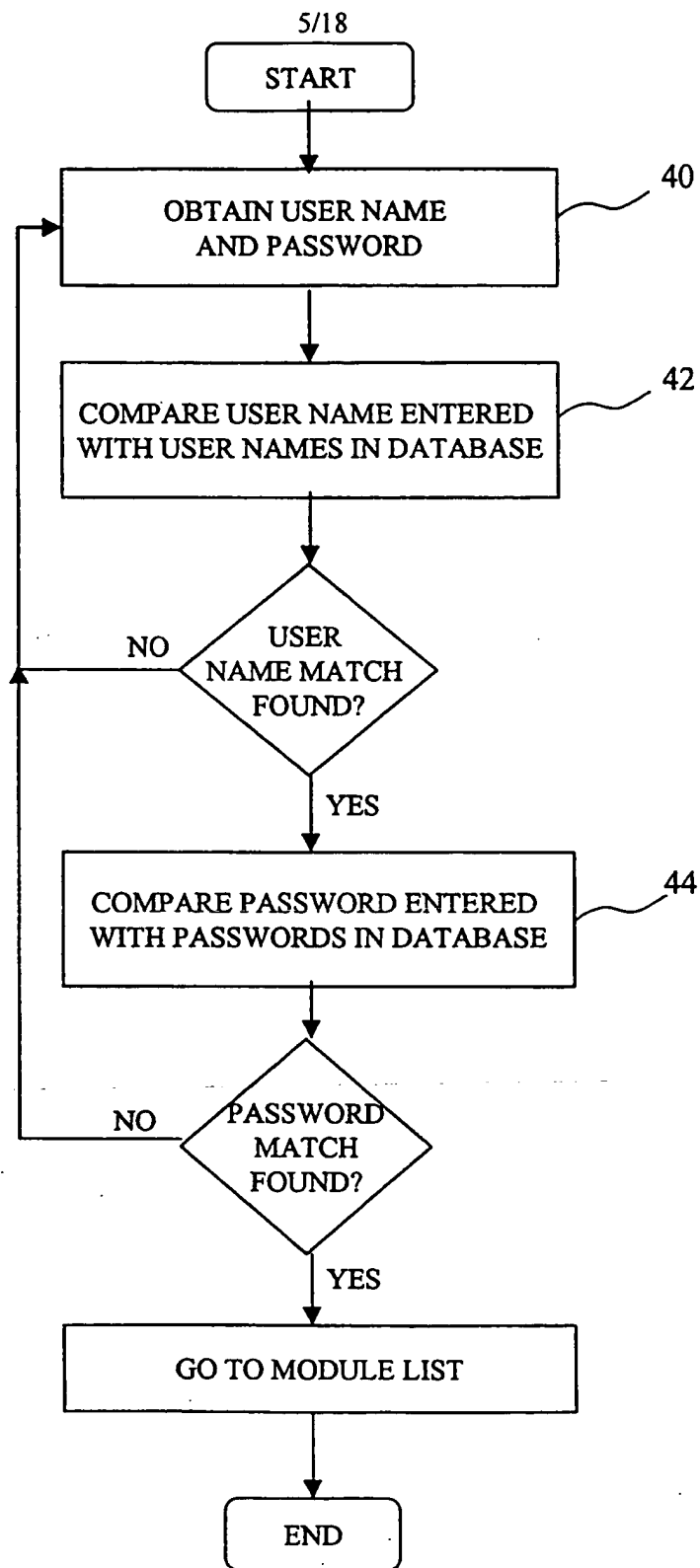


FIG. 5

Sign On

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Law School

LawLink Home

Sign On

This is your opportunity to make this service fit your precise needs and circumstances. Kindly respond as honestly and completely as possible. When you are finished, click SUBMIT.

Name:

Do You...	Yes
Authorize Employee Investigations	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communicate with Competitors	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communicate with the Media	<input type="checkbox"/>
Conduct Performance Evaluations	<input type="checkbox"/>
Contract with Vendors	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deal with Government Officials	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deal with Officials of Foreign Companies	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deal with Officials of Domestic Companies	<input type="checkbox"/>
Determine Product/Service Pricing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Enter into Contracts	<input type="checkbox"/>
Interact with Government Regulators	<input type="checkbox"/>
Interact with Securities Analysts	<input type="checkbox"/>
Interview Prospective Employees	<input type="checkbox"/>
Make Pricing Decisions	<input type="checkbox"/>
Make Purchasing Decisions	<input type="checkbox"/>
Negotiate Contracts	<input type="checkbox"/>
Own Company Securities	<input type="checkbox"/>
Participate in Industry Associations	<input type="checkbox"/>
Seek Advice from/counsel with Corporate Staff Attorneys	<input type="checkbox"/>
Serve on Another Company's Board of Directors	<input type="checkbox"/>
Serve on Your Company's Board of Directors	<input type="checkbox"/>
Set Purchasing Guidelines	<input type="checkbox"/>
Terminate Employees	<input type="checkbox"/>
Testify Before Governmental Agencies	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trade Your Company's Securities	<input type="checkbox"/>

FIG. 6

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Sign On

Select the Description that Best Describes your Current Position:

Senior Executive ☒

☐ Submit ☐ Reset

FIG. 7

**LEGAL COMPLIANCE EDUCATION CENTER**

To begin, click the module of your choice. The modules present a Tutorial, a Handbook, FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions), a listing of the Top Ten points covered by the module and the applicable Policies.

Module List

- ☐ Advertising
- ☐ Advertising and Marketing on the Internet
- ☒ Americans with Disabilities Act - Introduction
- ☒ Americans with Disabilities Act - Reasonable Accommodations
- ☐ Antitrust II -- Dealing with Competitors
- ☐ Antitrust III -- Dealing with Customers, Dealers, and Distributors
- ☐ Antitrust IV -- Price Discrimination
- ☐ Antitrust VII -- Monopolization
- ☐ Antitrust VIIb -- Monopolization II
- ☐ Attorney-Client Privilege
- ☐ Attorney-Client Privilege and Employee Investigations
- ☐ Basic Antitrust Concepts
- ☐ Basic Labor Charging
- ☒ Careful Communications
- ☐ Cellular Telephones
- ☐ Child Labor
- ☒ Civil False Claims Act
- ☐ Classifying Contingent Workers
- ☐ Contracts
- ☐ Copyright
- ☒ Corporate Political Activity

FIG. 8a

- ☒ Understanding the Federal Sentencing Guidelines
- ☒ Unfair Business Practices
- ☒ Using Contingent Workers
- ☒ UST Performance and Operations
- ☒ UST Releases, Records, and Enforcement
- ☒ Voluntary Disclosure (Government Contracts)

☒ Completed ☒ In Progress ☒ Not Started

FIG 8b

Advertising

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[Tutorial](#) | [Handbook](#) | [FAQs](#) | [Top Ten](#) | [Policies](#) | [Contact](#) | [More Information](#)

A consumer's choice of which products or services to purchase plays an important role in our economy. Wise choices depend on accurate and complete information, and advertising is an important source of this information. How companies convey information through advertising can determine how a consumer will choose, and the consequences for advertising found to be improper or misleading can be serious. This Module provides an overview of the basic legal rules that control advertising. It covers the general law against deceptive advertising and provides examples of advertising that may be seen as deceptive. It also covers enforcement practices and penalties pertaining to violations of advertising law.

[start tutorial](#)

FIG. 9

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Advertising



LESSONS

- ☒ Introduction
- 1. The Basic Rule
- 2. Common Situations
- 3. Other Practices
- 4. Special Rules
- ☒ REVIEW QUIZ



☒ To Do

☒ Completed

FIG. 10

Advertising

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LESSONS

1 Introduction

1. The Basic Rule
2. Common Situations
3. Other Practices
4. Special Rules

2 REVIEW QUIZ

- ▶ —● LESSON 1 TOPIC
- Introduction
 - The message con-
ad
 - Half-truths
 - Evidence about a
meaning
 - Is the ad decepti-
 - Puffing
 - Unfair advertising
 - Self Check

☐ To Do☒ Completed

FIG. 11

Introduction

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The basic rule for all advertising is that deceptive advertisements are forbidden.

Deciding whether an ad is deceptive involves answering two separate questions –

- What message did the ad convey?
- Does the product or service really have the attributes that the ad said it has?

Point to each item in the list for more information.

FIG. 12

ADVERTISING HANDBOOK

INTRODUCTION

Consumer decisions about which products and services to buy play a vital role in our economy. To choose well, people need accurate and complete information. One important and widespread source of this information is **advertising**.

This Handbook explains the basic legal rules that control advertising and discusses the laws against both **deceptive** and **unfair** advertising. You should remember that advertising includes all types of communications and marketing. For example, the rules applicable to television, newspaper, and magazine ads also apply to messages conveyed by direct mail, store posters, images on a website, and telemarketing presentations.

You should note that advertising law is complex and subject to a host of variations, exceptions, and other details that cannot be addressed in a brief treatment of this kind. This Handbook provides only a general overview of some of the basic concepts. It is not intended to provide advice or guidance regarding how you should act in a particular situation involving a particular ad. To be sure whether a particular advertisement complies with legal standards, you should always get advice and guidance from legal counsel.

THE PROHIBITION ON DECEPTIVE ADVERTISEMENTS

I. The Basic Rule

The basic rule for all advertising is that **deceptive advertisements are forbidden**. Deciding whether an ad is deceptive involves answering two separate questions –

- What **message** does the ad convey?
- Does the product or service **really** have the attributes the ad says it has?

Most of the disputes over advertising involve the first question, since there can often be a lot of debate about what a particular ad means to its audience. By contrast, it usually is relatively easy to determine what attributes a product or service actually has.

II. Determining The Message Conveyed By An Ad

An advertisement can convey meaning in many ways. The first thing to keep in mind is to look at the **entire communication** – all the words and all the pictures or images. Naturally, words sometimes mean different things to different people. And sometimes a combination of words and pictures may give an impression different from the words alone. In addition, people may **interpret** a message differently depending on who they think the source is (for example, celebrity endorsements).

If the meaning of an ad is not entirely clear, a court will ask how a **reasonably intelligent** member of the ad's intended audience would understand it. In other words, the fact that the ad might mean something different to an extremely gullible person carries little if any weight. A court will look at an ad's **express** statements, its **implied** statements, consumer surveys, and other evidence regarding the public's interpretation.

A. Express representations

The statements in an ad, using each word with its dictionary definition, are what we call the ad's **express representations**. Pictures can also include express representations if they

FIG. 13

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1. What sorts of communications are covered by the false advertising laws? ANSWER
2. What kind of ads are forbidden? ANSWER
3. What is an implied representation? ANSWER
4. What if a statement in an ad is literally true, but important information is left out? ANSWER
5. Does it matter who an ad is intended for? ANSWER
6. What is puffing? ANSWER
7. What is the substantiation requirement? ANSWER
8. Are there special advertising rules relating to the word "free"? ANSWER
9. What if the seller runs out of an advertised item? ANSWER
10. What are the rules for bait and switch advertising? ANSWER
11. Can pictorial representations in ads be deceptive? ANSWER
12. Can we call our product "official" or use an official-sounding name? ANSWER
13. Can we use endorsements from ordinary people? ANSWER
14. Can we use celebrity endorsements? ANSWER
15. Are there special rules for advertising directed at children? ANSWER
16. Can we use the names or trademarks of our competitors in our ads? ANSWER
17. Can we send merchandise to a customer and bill them unless the customer tells us in advance not to send it? ANSWER
18. Can we use a disclaimer to modify or clarify the main claims in an ad? ANSWER
19. As long as it's true, we can say our packaging is recyclable, right? ANSWER
20. Are there special rules relating to advertising for particular products? ANSWER
21. What is a warranty? ANSWER
22. Do we have to include any special language in our ads if we refer to warranties? ANSWER
23. Are there special rules for contests, games, and sweepstakes? ANSWER

FIG. 14

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- Do not engage in **deceptive advertising**. MORE
 - Make sure you have evidence in advance before you run an ad that makes a **performance claim**. MORE
 - If your ad says something is "free," the ad must clearly disclose any conditions on the offer. MORE
 - Make sure you have **adequate stock** of advertised items. MORE
 - Don't engage in "**bait and switch**" advertising. MORE
 - If your ads use endorsements, make sure the endorser really uses the product. MORE
 - **Advertising directed at children** will be interpreted from the standpoint of a child. MORE
 - **Telemarketing ads** are subject to an elaborate set of federal and state laws. MORE
 - You can't use a **disclaimer** to contradict a claim in an ad — you just end up with a deceptive ad. MORE
- If you sell household furniture, nursery products, used auto parts, jewelry, leather, tires, pet food, watches, vocational or long distance courses, or drugs, be sure to comply with the special advertising rules applicable to those products. MORE

FIG. 15

POLICIES

Policies for *Advertising* will be coming soon...

FIG. 16

QUESTIONS?

Contact info for *Advertising* will be coming soon...

FIG. 17

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/US00/31681

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(7) : G06F 17/60

US CL : 705/1

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

U.S. : 705/1; G06F 17/60

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

West, US Patents, Derwent

Search terms: internet education, internet learning, online learning, online education

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	EP 0 710 942 A2 (SIEFERT) 08 May 1996, pages 2-6	1- 9
X	DE 198 56 753 A 1 (WEITZEL et al) 09 December 1998, col. 3-4.	9 - 18
X, P	US 6,026,386 (LANNERT et al) 15 February 2000, col 12 -13	19



Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.



See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents:	*T* later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
A document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance	*X* document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
E earlier document published on or after the international filing date	*Y* document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art
L document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)	*G* document member of the same patent family
O document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means	
P document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed	

Date of the actual completion of the international search

14 FEBRUARY 2001

Date of mailing of the international search report

18 APR 2001

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